

to everyone in this Congress that quick action is needed now. Mother Nature waits on no one.

A TRIBUTE TO KRISTENE THALMAN—A DEDICATED PUBLIC SERVANT

HON. EDWARD R. ROYCE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a distinguished American, Kristine Thalman.

She dedicated her career to public service in city government and she ensured that our local citizens received the services they expect from their municipalities.

She has been the Intergovernmental Relations Director for the City of Anaheim California, for the last thirteen years of her career. She retires this month. Her career at Anaheim has been admired by many of us here in Congress.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Kris for her assistance to me since I am pleased to have part of the City of Anaheim in my Congressional District.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that this Thursday is Kris' birthday and certainly greetings are also in order at this time.

THE ORDEAL OF ANDREI BABITSKY

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, a small bit of good news has emerged from the tortured region of Chechnya, where the Russian military is killing, looting, and terrorizing the population under the guise of an "anti-terrorism operation."

Andrei Babitsky, the Radio Liberty correspondent who had disappeared in Chechnya in early February after Russian authorities had "exchanged" him to unknown persons in return for some Russian prisoners of war, has emerged in Dagestan and is now in Moscow recuperating from his ordeal. Mr. Babitsky's courageous reporting from the besieged city of Grozny had infuriated Russian military authorities, and he was arrested in mid-January and charged with "participating in an unlawful armed formation."

Prior to his release, Mr. Babitsky had spent time in the notorious Chernokozovo "filtration" camp where the Russian military has been detaining and torturing Chechens suspected of aiding the resistance. Following his arrival in Moscow, Mr. Babitsky provided a harrowing account of his incarceration at the Chernokozovo prison, and especially the savage treatment of his fellow prisoners. It is another graphic reminder that for all the fine words and denials coming out of Moscow, the Russian military has been conducting a brutal business that makes a mockery of the Geneva

Conventions and the code of military conduct stipulated in the 1994 Budapest Document of the OSCE.

Mr. Speaker, last month President Clinton stated that Russia's Acting President Putin is a man the United States "can do business with." With this in mind, I would suggest for the RECORD excerpts from Mr. Babitsky's interview with an NTV reporter in Russia. If Mr. Putin is aware of the state of affairs at Chernokozovo and condoning it, I would submit that our business with Mr. Putin should be extremely limited. If he is not aware of the truth, then his authority over Russia is a chimera, and we might better deal with the real rulers of Russia.

Babitsky's statement follows:

[From Hero of the Day NTV Program, 7:40 p.m., Feb. 29, 2000]

INTERVIEW WITH RADIO LIBERTY
CORRESPONDENT ANDREI BABITSKY

BABITSKY. On the 16th I tried to leave the city of Grozny through the settlement of Staraya Sunzha, a suburb of Grozny which at the time was divided into two parts. One part was controlled by federal troops and the other by the Chechen home guard.

I entered the territory controlled by the federals and it was there that I was recognized. I was identified as a journalist. I immediately presented my documents. All the subsequent claims that I was detained as a person who had to be identified are not quite clear to me. I had my passports with me, my accreditation card of a foreign correspondent.

Then I was taken to Khankala. Not what journalists who had covered the first war regarded as Khankala but to an open field. There was an encampment there consisting of trucks used as their office by army intelligence officers. Two of my cassettes that I had filmed in Grozny were taken from me. They contained unique frames. I think those were the last video pictures ever taken by anyone before Grozny was stormed. Those, again, were pictures of thousands of peaceful civilians many of whom, as we now know, were killed by federal artillery shells.

I spent two nights in Khankala, in the so-called Avtozak, a truck converted into a prison cell. On the third day I was taken to what the Chechens call a filtration center, the preliminary detention center in Chernokozovo.

I believe I am the only journalist of those who covered the first and the second Chechen wars who has seen a filtration center from the inside. I must say that all these horrors that we have heard from Chechens who had been there have been confirmed. Everything that we read about concentration camps of the Stalin period, all that we know about the German camps, all this is present there.

The first three days that I spent there, that was the 18th, 19th and the 20th, beatings continued round the clock. I never thought that I would hear such a diversity of expressions of human pain. These were not just screams, these were screams of every possible tonality and depth, these were screams of most diverse pain. Different types of beatings cause a different reaction.

Q. Are you saying that you got this treatment?

A. No, that was the treatment meted out to others. I was fortunate, it was established at once that I am a journalist, true, nobody knew what type of journalist I was. Everybody there were surprised that a journalist

happened to be there. In principle, the people there cannot be described as intellectuals. They decided that there was nothing special about this, that such things do happen in a war. As a journalist I was "registered", as they say, only once. They have this procedure there. When a new detainee is being taken from his cell to the investigator he is made to crawl all the way under a rain of blows with rubber sticks.

It hurts but one can survive it. This is a light treatment as compared with the tortures to which Chechens are subjected day and night, those who are suspected of collaborating with the illegal armed formations. There are also cases when some testimony is beaten out of detainees.

Q. What is the prison population there?

A. In my opinion . . . I was in cell No. 17 during the first three days. In that cell there were 13 inhabitants of the village Aberdykel (sp.—FNS). Most of them were young. Judging by their stories, I am not an investigator and I could not collect a sufficiently full database, but in such an atmosphere one very rarely doubts the veracity of what you are told. Mostly these were young men who had nothing to do with the war. They were really common folk. They were treating everything happening around them as a calamity but they were not taking any sides. They were simply waiting for this calamity to pass either in this direction or that direction.

Beatings as a method of getting testimony. This is something that, unfortunately, is very well known in Russian and not only Russian history and tradition. But I must say that apart from everything, in my opinion, in all this torture, as it seemed to me, a large part is due to sheer sadism. In other words, an absolutely unwarranted torturing of people.

For instance, I heard . . . You know, you really can't see this because all this happens outside of your cell. But the type of screams leaves no doubt about what is happening. You know, this painful reaction. For two hours a woman was tortured on the 20th or the 19th. She was tortured, I have no other word to explain what was happening. That was not a hysteria. I am not a medic but I believe that we all know what a hysteria is. There were screams indicating that a person was experiencing unbearable pain, and for a long period of time.

EXPRESSING SORROW OF THE
HOUSE AT THE DEATH OF THE
HONORABLE CARL B. ALBERT,
FORMER MEMBER OF CONGRESS
FROM THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA

SPEECH OF

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 8, 2000

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Speaker Carl Albert passed away Friday, February 4, 2000, after a distinguished career during which he shepherded the nation through some of its most difficult years. The people of the Thirtieth Congressional District of Texas pay tribute to this great American and join the nation to express sincere sorrow regarding his passing.

Beginning in the Eightieth Congress, Speaker Albert spent the next thirty years representing the citizens of the Third Congressional District of Oklahoma in the U.S. Congress and helped create a new era of American opportunity. He supported civil rights and antipoverty legislation. Speaker Albert provided invaluable leadership to the House of Representatives as majority leader during the Eighty-seventh through Ninety-first Congresses. As leader of this legislative body during the Ninety-second through Ninety-fourth Congresses, Speaker Albert fostered a lasting legacy.

Speaker Albert successfully steered the nation through difficult times and ensured a fair forum for democratic discussion on issues ranging from the impeachment of President Richard Nixon to the war in Vietnam. He provided the nation with stability and security while he was first in line to succeed the President of the United States, in 1973 and again in 1974.

Speaker Albert personified great American values throughout his life. He rose from childhood poverty to become a Rhodes Scholar, winner of the Bronze Star, and a distinguished U.S. Congressman.

During a time when we sometimes let partisanship get the better of us, we should look at Carl Albert as a symbol of the most esteemed values of the U.S. Congress. I join the nation in paying tribute to an exemplary citizen, who was during his lifetime and continues to be an inspiration in the greatest traditions of domestic representation.

THE AFFORDABLE DRINKING
WATER ACT OF 2000

HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Affordable Drinking Water Act of 2000. This legislation provides a new and creative way to bring safe drinking water in a cost-effective manner to those rural Americans who will struggle to meet this most basic need.

Under the bill, the government, working in partnership with nonprofit entities, would assist low to moderate-income individuals secure financing for the installation or refurbishing of individual household water well systems. The legislation authorizes a public/private partnership that allows homeowners of modest means to bring old household water well systems up to current standards, replace systems that have met their expected life, or provide homeowners without a drinking water source with a new individual household water well system.

The Affordable Drinking Water Act is a targeted approach. Only low to moderate income Americans who request assistance with their drinking water needs are eligible. The traditional federally subsidized long-pipe water systems run water lines across the countryside in front of homes that are experiencing drinking water problems, but also homes that are not. The current system serves customers without

adequate financial means but also many that do not need financial help. This lack of targeting federal dollars is often a waste of scarce resources. This legislation creates a financing option to install individual wells where they make the most economic sense.

This bill also provides assistance to the drinking water delivery option many rural Americans prefer. In a recent national survey, more than 80% of well owners prefer their individual household water well systems to other drinking water delivery options. Only 8.3% said they would rather have their drinking water from a water utility company. This legislation gives consumers the ability to pay for new or refurbished individual household water well systems with convenient monthly payments, like other utility bills.

It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that organizations like the National Ground Water Association, a group that has a long and distinguished record preserving and protecting America's precious ground water resources, strongly endorses this legislation. It is my hope that other organizations and communities that support common sense, innovative approaches to providing affordable, safe water to rural Americans will also endorse the Affordable Drinking Water Act of 2000.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation that provides a cost-effective alternative to meeting the drinking water needs of rural America.

IVANPAH VALLEY AIRPORT
PUBLIC LANDS TRANSFER ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM GIBBONS

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 9, 2000

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1695) to provide for the conveyance of certain Federal public lands in the Ivanpah Valley, Nevada, to Clark County, Nevada, for the development of an airport facility, and for other purposes:

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Chairman, I include the following letters of support for H.R. 1695, the Ivanpah Valley Airport Public Lands Transfer Act.

AIRPORTS COUNCIL
INTERNATIONAL,

Washington, DC, March 7, 2000.

DEAR MEMBER OF CONGRESS: Airports Council International-North America urges your strong support of H.R. 1695, the Ivanpah Valley Airport Public Lands Transfer Act. This legislation would enable the Clark County, Nevada Department of Aviation to buy 6,500 of federal land for a new airport to serve Las Vegas.

The number of air passengers traveling in the United States is expected to increase from less than 700 million to over a billion in just a few short years. We need to add airport capacity across the nation to accommodate this growth.

Air traffic at Las Vegas McCarran International airport grew 11 percent last year alone, creating the prospect of significant future delays if new runway and terminal facilities are not built. Las Vegas is currently

the tenth busiest airport in the nation with connections to over 50 other cities. Delays in Las Vegas will mean delays in other cities as well.

The FAA Reauthorization package agreed to by the conferees this week provides airports with much of the funding they require to meet tomorrow's needs. In order for this important work to be done, airports such as Las Vegas must be able to overcome the environmental opposition to their expansion projects. Existing airports all across the nation are facing congestion in terminals and on runways. New airport capacity is needed today.

We urge you to support H.R. 1695.

Sincerely,

JEFFREY GOODELL,
Vice President, Government Affairs.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF AIRPORT EXECUTIVES,
Alexandria, VA, March 3, 2000.

Hon. JAMES GIBBONS,
U.S. Representative, Cannon House Office
Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE GIBBONS: The U.S. House of Representatives will shortly be considering H.R. 1695, which would permit Clark County, Nevada to purchase 6,500 acres of federal land in the Ivanpah Valley for a future commercial airport site. Your support, and that of your colleagues, is critical to ensuring the continued economic vitality of Southern Nevada well into the 21st Century.

Passenger traffic at McCarran International Airport has been increasing for the past 16 consecutive months. During that period, passenger enplanements have risen by over 11 percent. Continued growth, at even a moderate rate, will bring the Airport to its effective capacity by 2012. The Clark County Department of Aviation estimates it will take at least seven years to plan, design and construct the new airport. I think you will agree that prompt congressional action is critical.

The Ivanpah Valley is the best location for a future second airport to serve the Las Vegas metropolitan area. The proposed location is 35 miles from the heart of the Las Vegas valley, between Jean and Prim, Nevada. Also, it is bounded by Interstate Highway 15 and main line of the Union Pacific Railroad, giving the new airport excellent and essential multimodal/intermodal surface access opportunities.

Thank you again for your support and assistance. If further information is desired, please do not hesitate to contact Randall H. Walker, Director of Aviation at (702) 261-5150.

Sincerely yours,

TODD HAUTPLI,
Senior Vice President for
Policy and Government Affairs.

LAS VEGAS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF IVANPAH AIRPORT
LAND SALE

Whereas, visitors from outside the state directly and indirectly account for more than half the state's economic activity thereby constituting the economic lifeblood of Nevada; and

Whereas, airline passengers constitute nearly 50% of the visitors to the Las Vegas Valley and this percentage is likely to increase as Las Vegas adds to its presence as a gateway for international travelers; and

Whereas, McCarran International Airport has a capacity to handle 55 million passengers annually. In 1999, over 33.6 million